Typhaaaaargh!

Richard Lansdown[1] and Fred Rumsey[2]

1 – Associate Researcher, 2 - Senior Curator in Charge

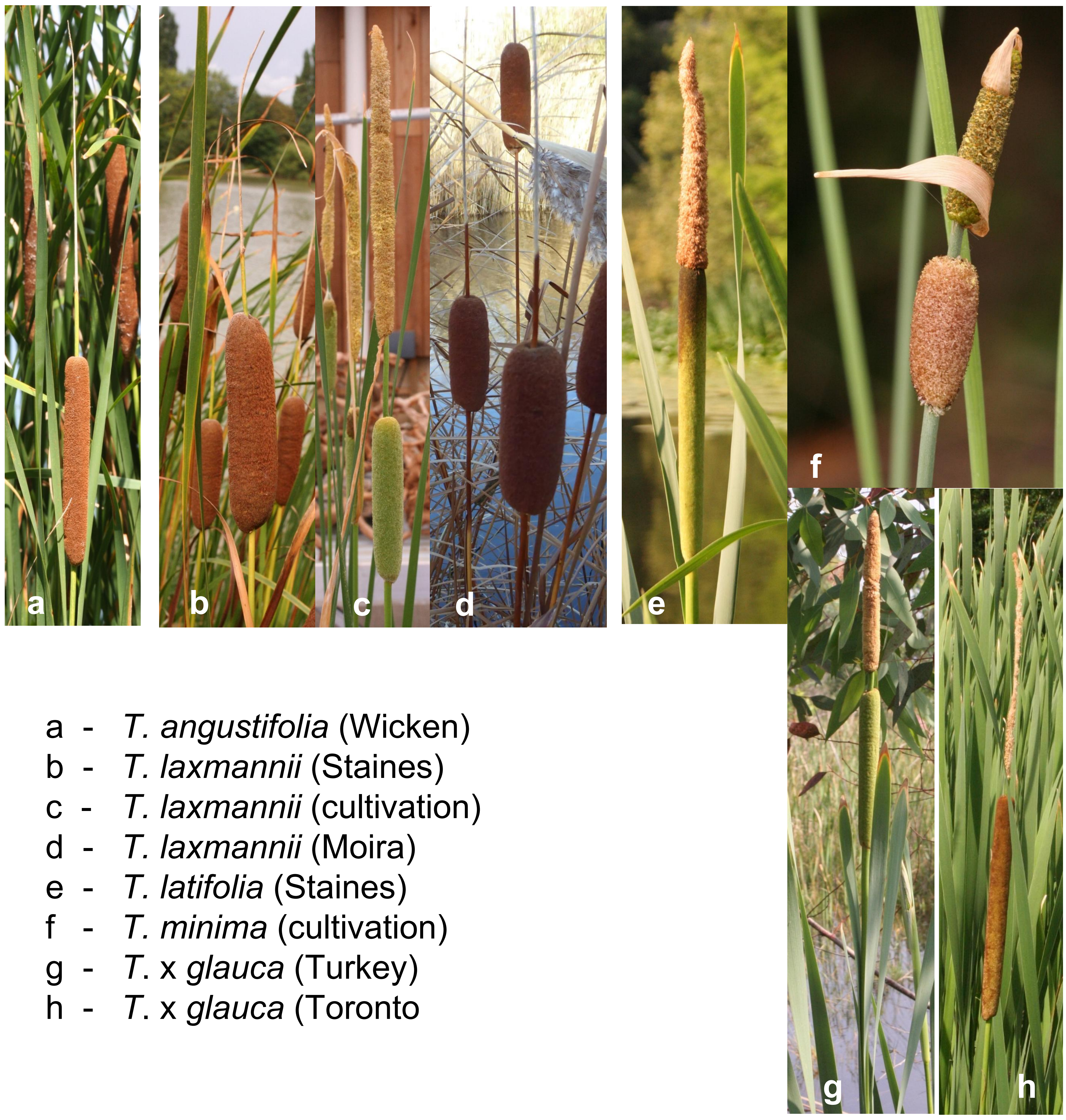
Dept. of Life Sciences: Algae, Fungi and Plants Division, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD, UK

Typha in Britain and Ireland

A total of 40 *Typha* species are currently recognised worldwide (Plants of the World Online http://www.plantsoftheworldonline.org) of which 25 are mainly found or endemic to western Asia and may be considered western Asian ephemerals (taxa which may disappear on close scrutiny). Seven credible species and six hybrid combinations are reported to occur in Europe, with an increasing number of new country records, some involving aliens (e.g. Topiĉ and Ozimec 2001, Bayla *et al*. 2005).

Four species and one hybrid Typha have been recorded in Britain and Ireland:

T. angustifolia is widespread and abundant in Britain south of Glasgow but scattered further north and in Ireland. It is easily recognised by the long, narrow ♀ spikes which are roughly the same length as the ♂, from which they are separated by a gap usually more than 5 cm.
T. laxmannii is known only from a single site in Britain (BSBI maps), however in 2010 an odd *Typha* was found on the margin of a flooded gravel pit in West London and in 2018 similar material was found in the Ashby Canal at Moira. Both of these populations show the short ♀ spike and relatively long ♂ spike separated by a clear gap which are typical of *T. laxmannii*. *T. laxmannii* is sold in garden centres throughout the country and it is likely to be increasingly established.
T. minima occurs in fewer than ten sites scattered around London and at a single site in Cambridgeshire. It differs from all the other *Typha* species occurring in Britain and Ireland by the very short broad ♀ spikes, the persistent bracts and the leaves on flowering shoots being reduced to sheaths.
T. latifolia is widespread and abundant through much of Britain and Ireland, apart from some parts of Scotland. It is usually readily distinguished from other species by the contiguous ♂ and♀ spikes and broad, glaucous leaves.
T. × glauca (*T. angustifolia* × *T. latifolia*) is scattered throughout southern England and rare or under-recorded, or both, elsewhere. The most reliable characters for identification of *T.* × *glauca* are probably combinations of broad leaves and long, narrow ♀ spikes. The gap between the ♂ and♀ spikes appears to be very variable and not very reliable.



a - *T. angustifolia* (Wicken)
b - *T. laxmannii* (Staines)
c - *T. laxmannii* (cultivation)
d - *T. laxmannii* (Moira)
e - *T. latifolia* (Staines)
f - *T. minima* (cultivation)
g - *T.* x *glauca* (Turkey)
h - *T.* x *glauca* (Toronto

Key to the identification of *Typha* occurring in Europe

1	Leaves on fertile shoots reduced to sheaths; ♀ spikes 1.5-4.5 cm long	***T. minima***
	Leaves on fertile shoots with blade; ♀spikes >6 cm	2
2	♂ and ♀ spikes contiguous (or rarely) separated by ≤15 mm; pollen grains in tetrads	3
	♂ spikes separated from ♀ by >5 mm (very occasionally less); pollen grains simple	4
3	♂ spikes equal to or longer than ♀	***T. latifolia***
	♂ spikes shorter than ♀, ♀ spikes 1.5-4 x length of ♂	***T. shuttleworthii***
4	♂ and ♀ spikes of ± equal length	5
	♀ spikes much shorter than ♂	6
5	Leaves ≤300 cm long, >4 mm wide; ♂ and ♀ spikes each >20 cm long	***T. angustifolia***
	Leaves ≤110 cm long, >4.5 mm wide; ♂ and ♀ spikes each <10 cm long	***T. lugdunensis***
6	Leaves ≤300 cm long, >4 mm wide; ♀ spikes (7.5-)18-23(-30) cm long	***T. domingensis***
	Leaves ≤110 cm long, >4.5 mm wide; ♀ spikes (2-)5-8(-10) cm long	***T. laxmannii***